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Love Poems

by

W. H. Davies



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Love Poems

Seed and Flower

The seed-time of this lovely life,
So long, so long ago;
Before it grew and came to flower —
No man shall ever know.

How long it lay within this Earth,
We shall not understand;
We can but guess from whence it came,
And Bless the Vanished Hand.

We'll never know the seed, my Love,
But here's a life in flower —
To kiss and smell, and call it sweet
A thousand years and more!



The Little Devil

The Sun has his spots, the Moon has her shadows,
The Sea has his wrinkles, the Land has her warts;
Sweet Faith has her doubts, and lovers their quarrels,
And nothing is perfect in all its parts.

How lovely is a garden when neglected!
What could be uglier than a perfect face!
Shall I then call my Love a perfect angel
Sent down from Heaven to take a mortal's place?

How could she wear and last this common life,
Unless her charms had some alloy of evil?
An Angel, no; but by Love's two extremes,
Of ice and fire — '*Come here, you little devil!*'

When We Forget

When we forget that Nature gives
No other home to lovers than
The haunted house of Death —
Let us then call our love immortal,
Nor think we waste our breath.

But Love, still looking for a place
To lean her head against, and sing,
Should never have her childish brain
Vexed by a thought so cold and grave,
To turn her joy to pain.



Love and Money

I count my pounds as three times two,
And five times one, my shillings;
Six pounds, five shillings for my Love,
To buy a coat with frillings.

But as she takes the light and air,
So will she take my money;
And all the thanks I'll get will be
A quiet — 'Kiss me, Honey'.

And so I will, at such a rate
That, long before it's over —
A deer pursued by fire and wind
Shall fly to safer cover!



Where We Agree

Give her her ribbon, belt or scarf —
To match my rainbow in the sky;
Let her prefer her looking-glass,
When dewdrops meet me, eye to eye.
Give her her pretty flowers or stars,
Embossed in silk and figured lace;
While I prefer their living forms,
Set in a green or azure place.
Give her her choice, and give me mine,
Remembering still Love's greater worth —
That she and I prefer each other
To any thing in Heaven or Earth.

Brother Gods

If woman's a delightful creature,
A dog can be another;
But, Lord, who ever saw such fools,
When they are out together!

Cupid and Bacchus are the same,
Delightful in their way;
But when these youngsters share one life —
The very devil's to pay!

As fast as Cupid builds his dreams,
Young Bacchus knocks them down;
He leaves poor Cupid limp with tears,
And struts about the town.

So let us all be warned in time,
When brother fights with brother;
Let's make our choice of one, and then —
The devil take the other.



Spirits and Bodies

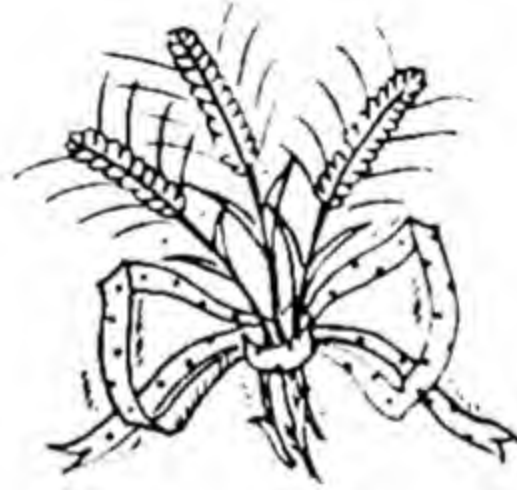
Two spirits in two bodies, Love,
We live together here, and thrive;
If one of these two bodies die,
How much of us will then survive?
If either you or I die first,
What comfort has the passing bell?
Two spirits in one body, Love,
Can hold together fairly well.
So when there's but one body left,
And that dies too, let it be known
That two fond spirits leave together,
As neither one could go alone.



Regret

How strange that Love should be like this,
So miserly and mean;
To wrap such radiant corn in leaves
Where little can be seen.

When sweet affection wastes its time
On gravestones white and cold —
Shall we not pity their remorse,
Whose love was never told?



To-morrow

What can I find in my wild orchard,
To please your pretty eyes to-morrow;
A kitten mewling, short and sweet,
Like the chirp of a sleeping Sparrow?
A bee as big as a little bird;
Flowers red or white, pink, blue or yellow?
Or a bird as small as the bumble bee —
To please your pretty eyes to-morrow?



To-night

What can I find in the city shops,
To please your pretty eyes to-night;
A lovely gown that's made of silk,
Soft to the hand, and gossamer-light?
A little book with silver clasps,
With golden words on all its pages?
Two bowls of glass, wherein the lights
Flit here and there, like birds in cages?
A dog to wind up like a clock,
That's made to growl, and then to yap?
Or Cupid as a fountain, made
To piddle in his mother's lap?

Married Couples

When Love is strong in married couples,
They grow in looks like one another;
Till strangers think they see a son,
And then a daughter, of one mother.

Come, Time, and make us look like twins,
My wife, my sister, I her brother;
That this amazing proof may show
How she and I have loved each other!

✓ The Laws of Beauty

The laws of Beauty and its patterns
Must all conform to blood and race;
A nose that's tilted, round and small,
Is not for any Jewish face.
To say that she is tall and plump
Would be a blemish in Japan;
A foot coercion makes no smaller
Would never please a Chinaman.
To say her skin's as white as foam,
With sea-blue eyes, so soft and mellow,
Would please no race whose beauties must,
Like all their gods, be brown or yellow.
But let these laws be what they will,
And differ with our blood and race;
Come, fair or dark; come, white or brown —
Where shall I find a sweeter face?

This Green Orchard

The healthiest place for Love is here,
And not in any room;
Out in this old, green orchard, with
The apple trees in bloom.

For here we see no idle hooks,
No empty shelf or box,
To set Love's thoughts on sable scarves,
Or stoles of silver fox.

The first sweet lovers known to life,
Had nothing more than this:
Shall we, far richer, when compared,
Be poorer in our bliss?

Love



Love Lights His Fire

Love lights his fire to burn my Past —
There goes the house where I was born!
And even Friendship — Love declares —
Must feed his precious flames and burn.

I stuffed my life with odds and ends,
But how much joy can Knowledge give?
The World my guide, I lived to learn —
From Love, alone, I learn to live.

Past and Present

I who have seen a tiny cloud,
No bigger than my Lady's puff,
Powder the Heavens with miles of soot,
And make the seas all wild and rough;

I who have seen that speck at last
Sink half a fleet and drown its men,
With waves, like eagles, swooping down
To carry off both sheep and pen;

I who have felt and seen all this,
And trained my thoughts to quiet scorn —
Am still the man to dress Love's finger,
Scratched by a little pin or thorn.

Love Ten Years Old

Our love this day is ten years old,
What thoughts are in my sweetheart's mind?
'A kinder, sweeter tempered man,'
Says she, 'no woman could ever find.'

What says the World, that knows me less,
And judged me of another kind —
That robs a poor man of his dog,
And knows the man is old and blind!

True or Fickle

Who would not be a poet, when
The girl he loves is sweet and kind,
And fancies burn and tickle;
When both his Love and Muse are true,
And neither one is fickle?

And if there is but one that's true,
To smile or prattle, kiss or sing,
He will not scorn the other;
But take a joy that's half complete,
As poet, or as lover.

But when the both of them are false,
His sweetheart turned contrary,
And Thought still sulks from Word —
Who'll praise him for his peevish chirps?
Who wants that moulting bird?

Alone

When we're together, how the moments fly!

We toss them up like jewels in the sun;
We catch them lightly as a falling leaf,

To find a light that's new in every one;
Life then to us is all a game of play
With leaves and jewels, and too short a day.

But when alone with Time, and you away,

I hear those heavy, deadly strokes of his
At Life's foundations, aiming at our years,

That fall in thuds from blows that never miss;
What are our moments then, so weak and small —
When years of life are heard to crash and fall!

The Shadow

She flies from my shadow,
To her lover, the Sun;
Yet for her rare beauty,
I still follow on.

Her wings tipped with silver,
Jet-black, and of gold,
She flies to her lover,
From a shadow that's cold.

Stay, Butterfly, stay,
My Love's full of laughter:
Why fly from a shadow?
She still follows after!

Love's Rivals

What glorious sunsets have their birth
In Cities fouled by smoke!
This tree — whose roots are in a drain —
Becomes the greenest Oak!
No hand's more gentle than a thief's,
Greed has the brightest eyes;
And by their straight, clear, honest looks,
Great villains live on lies!
Yet Love, whose source is sweet and pure,
Still makes no question why
A thief should have more gentle hands,
Or Greed a brighter eye.

✓ A Foolish Tongue

Her face is full of silent Pain —
 Forgive my foolish tongue;
I with my one desire in life,
 To praise our love in song.

If I should do this thing again,
 Lord, let Thy vengeance come;
Take back Thy precious gift of song,
 And strike me cold and dumb!

If I again forget her love,
 And utter words of blame,
Let my own mother from her grave
 Rise up, and cry — 'For shame!'



Faults

The healthiest trees bear fruits that fail,
By worm or frost they drop decayed;
The very Heavens have weakling stars
That fall from their high state, and fade.
But as a thousand silver stars
Stand firm and fast for one that's lost;
And many a strong and golden pear
Survives the worm, the wind, and frost:
So must I think, when Love's at fault,
Of charms secure and manifold —
As stars whose silver numbers last,
And pears that reach the age of gold.

Competitors

I had a friend to smoke and drink,
We dined at clubs and saw the Play;
Till Love came, like the smallest wind,
And looked him quietly away.

So Friendship goes, and Love remains,
And who can question which is best —
A Friendship reared on the bottle, or
A Love that's reared at the breast?

Fortunes

'This house is worth a thousand pounds,
You'll not be very poor;
My pictures and my books,' said I —
'May fetch a thousand more.'
But I, who thought to see her smile,
With nothing strange or wild,
Turned round to find her limp and cold,
And crying like a child.
It seems that I, a living man,
Though life was but a linger —
Was worth a thousand cold, dead hands
With a fortune for each finger.

Great Lovers

Why did we think no power in Heaven
Would ever chill or blind that loving eye?
Sweet Earth, so young and green, so beautiful,
Your lover is but mortal, and must die.

Burning himself to nothing, day by day,
Your lover, that great Sun, is slowly dying;
And where you smile, a Queen of beauty now,
There'll be a poor, unhappy lady, crying.

Let Love Live On

Love is the precious jewel in our Life,
The sweetest thing this Earth has ever known,
Found in a labourer's cottage, on a stool,
Then in a palace, sitting on a throne.
She lets no Knowledge cloud our mortal hours,
Or cast its shadows on her glorious eyes;
All hope of Life immortal after Death
Springs out of Love's abiding qualities.
Love judges neither blood, nor pomp, nor state,
She questions for its *heart* each living thing:
What kind of woman is our English queen,
What kind of man her husband and our king.



The Ghost

Seek not to know Love's full extent,
For Death, not Life, must measure Love;
Not till one lover's dead and gone,
Is Love made strong enough to prove.
What woman, with a ghostly lover,
Can hold a mirror to her hair?
A man can tell his love with tears,
When but a woman's ghost is there.
Our greatest meeting is to come,
When either you or I are lost:
When one, being left alone in tears,
Confesses to the other's ghost.

Pecking

One kiss to open up the day,
One kiss at night to close it fast;
Sometimes a kiss or two between,
To help the first and last.
But when I woke this morning early,
I caught her pecking at my face;
Greedy for grain, she pecked and pecked
All over the golden place.
And artful I, still feigning sleep,
Lay quiet, while that little chick
Enjoyed the grain Love scattered there —
And still went on to peck.

Words and Kisses

She pecks the earth for every second,
Young Jenny Wren, while on the run:
'Come, Love, and watch this little darling;
Come, see this pretty little one.'

'Why waste such precious words on birds?'
Said jealous Love, not liking this.
'They are but words, my Love,' said I —
'To make birds jealous when we kiss!'



Good and Evil

A wealth of stars in Winter time
Brings frost severe and cold;
And Winter's coppers are no more
Than Autumn's wasted gold:
While Love herself, this very morning,
Scorned me without one word of warning.

Had I not seen a Bumble-bee
Stand on his head in clover;
Parting the folds with hairy legs,
For comfort under cover;
Had I not seen this Bee and wondered —
Could I have left Love's scorn unpondered?

The Peacemaker

When she threatened to leave me,
And I, full of evil,
Cried 'Hoi, tiddlee, hoi,
Here's work for the devil! —'

With a sharp, single cry,
With a quick, sudden burst,
Up sat our little blind dog,
And begged to be nursed.

The Supper

Since music is Love's milk and keeps him strong,
Give him his supper, let the feast last long;
Let it begin like thunder, with a power
That in mid-June our nightingales adore.

Then let it come to whispers, low and deep,
As a dreaming Bee that buzzes in his sleep;
While Love's small head, that on your shoulder lies,
Has fixed on me his large, unwavering eyes.

Marvellous Ears

That speckled Thrush, that stands so still,
Is listening for the worms to stir;
He hears a worm — what marvellous ears!
That he can live by ear alone,
And save his eyes to guard his fears.

So when I have a secret care,
And think my voice is well controlled,
Love, like the Thrush that hears a worm,
Detects it with her marvellous ear —
No matter what her eyes affirm.

Beauty and Song

The Peacock, that fine-feathered bird,
Has but a screeching voice;
The Robin, with a lovely breast,
Sings once, and quarrels twice.

I married you for youth and beauty,
The first to please my mind;
And found Love's strength was in her voice —
To keep it sweet and kind.

Three Score and Ten

Ten Junes to hear the Nightingale,
Ten Aprils for the Cuckoo's coming;
And only ten more Februarys, Love,
To celebrate our wedding.
Come, happier thoughts, and cry 'Good Morrow'!
Though we but kiss three times a day,
Three hundred days and sixty five,
In every year, must come our way!
Think how these kisses too will make
One thousand and ninety-five a year!
And all the thousands that must follow
In ten years' reckoning up, my Dear!

Let Us Lie Close

Let us lie close, as lovers should,
That, if I wake when barn-cocks crow —
I'll feel your body at my side,
And hear your breathing come and go.

When dreams, one night, had moved our bodies,
I, waking, listened for your breath;
I feared to reach and touch your face,
That it was icy-cold in death.

Let us lie close, as lovers should,
And count our breaths, as some count sheep;
Until we say 'Good night', at last,
And with one kiss prepare for sleep.

Light and Darkness

Though I sit brooding here, with my eyes closed,
Yet have I seen the light go suddenly;
Though I had shut them fast, to see no light,
A sudden wave of darkness, without warning,
Broke on their trembling lids, and forced my sight.

So when my Love has gone out quietly,
And left me here alone, all lost in dreams,
I see the shadow of her absence fall
Across my vision, that had been too blind
To see her body in the light at all.

Stings

Though bees have stings, I doubt if any bee
Has ever stung a flower in all his life:
Neither, my love, can I think ill of you,
Though half the world and I may be at strife.

Can I forget your coming, like the Moon
When, robed in light, alone, without a star,
She visits ruins; and the peace you brought,
When I with all the world was still at war.

Last Thoughts^{*}

If my last thoughts contain no wish
To feed the wild birds here;
If I forget to pity you,
And show no mark of care;
If I forget your kindness, love,
And hasten to my grave:
Then, false to all that made life sweet,
What good shall I deserve?
Then, though I see Heaven close at hand,
And hear the music too,
May twenty devils seize my soul —
Until I think of you!

A[✓] Lullaby of Rest

Workhouse and Bedlam, Refuge, Den,
For Passions deaf and blind —
How many strange and peevish things
Have harboured in my mind!

Love, dear!
Ambition, Pride and Greed, with all
The Body's Appetites,
Knocked at my door for lodgings, and
Disturbed my days and nights.

Till, treading softly, like a bird,
When young ones fill her nest —
Love sits beside me here, and sings
A lullaby of rest.

Beauty and Brain

When I was old, and she was young,
With all the beauty hers —
I wooed her with a silver tongue,
With music for her ears;
And shall I now complain to find
That Beauty has so small a mind?

If this young Chit had had more sense,
Would she have married me?
That she gave me the preference,
Proved what a fool was she:
Then let me die if I complain
That Beauty has too small a brain.

The Tyrants

Love came about the Cuckoo's time,
Two months ago, or more;
In April I was rich in joy,
But June has left me poor.

Love cried for money all day long,
For more than I possessed;
The Cuckoo, making echoes fast,
Destroyed my quiet rest.

Now, in July, in this dead calm,
When both are gone away —
I sit alone, a peevish man,
And miss them every day.

Three Loves

My silver love is shared by all,
With every flower and bird;
With every man that greets me well,
A friendly nod or word.

My golden love is kept for two,
That share my fire and mat;
A little dog with simple ways,
And my self-conscious cat.

My diamond love, more precious far,
Is shared by only one;
And where She is that love prevails,
On mat or grass, or stone.



His Throne

When Love has lost his bite and sting,
And all his fire has gone —
What other god shall take his place,
And fill his golden throne?

Where Love has sat, there let him lie,
Whether he lives or dies;
Still on that throne, where none succeeds,
Embalmed in memories.

Flirting

Should her flirting prove a danger,
What's the proper thing to change her;
Shall I, marching up and down,
Stamp and tremble, sulk and frown?
Since no woman will obey,
Bid her go, and then she'll stay.
When a woman's lost to reason,
That's the stuff to stop her treason.

Sing a song of 'Flirt, my Pretty,
Flirt and flit, I need no pity;
Though you mend my shirt, or never —
Why should I be pledged to either!
Sing a song of 'Heigh, Heigh Ho,
What care I what Women do!
When a woman's lost to reason,
That's the stuff to stop her treason.

The Jealous Lover

Who is this man that, brain on fire,
Can reason without rule;
The fastest thinker known to life,
And yet the greatest fool?
This man is blind, and yet can see
Beyond our common eyes;
This man is deaf, yet hears plain words
When others hear but sighs.
Thinking that silence proves our guilt,
And speech is all a lie,
He cries aloud, 'My name is Truth —
Who calls me Jealousy?'

Love Me No More

Since Love cries out for money, still,
Where little is, or none —
Love me no more till I am dead,
And every penny gone.

Is there one tender thought to come,
When I have nothing more —
To show the World that Love, though small,
Can be secure and pure?

Love me no more till I am dead,
And dangers all removed;
When, though my worms can spin no silk,
I lie unblamed, and loved.

The Faithful One

The bird that fills my ears with song,
The Sun that warms me with his fire;
The dog that licks my face and hands,
And She whose beauty I desire —
Each of these think that he or she
Creates in me the joy they see.

But when my dog's gone off with a bitch,
And there's no Sun, nor bird in song;
When Love's false eyes seek other men,
And leave me but her lying tongue;
Still will my Joy — though forced to roam —
Remember me and come back home.

Eardrops

This bag of cherries for my Love:
She takes one lovely Pair,
And makes an eardrop of each one,
To fit in either ear.
Until I swear it seems to me,
To see those Cherry stones,
They almost match in loveliness
The flesh that's on her bones.
They match her eyes in light and size,
With such a glowing stain —
That every precious pearl is hurled
Back to its sea again!



The Players

To-day I acted Christ,
While Joy played Lazarus;
I buried her in ferns
And heaps of gathered grass.
And when I cried 'Come forth!'
Up from the grave she rose
And, with a peal of bells,
Threw off her burial clothes.

When Sleep this night has come,
With feathers for our grass,
Shall we reverse our parts
Of Christ and Lazarus?
When I — a buried man —
Hear 'Lazarus, come forth!'
I'll rise and, with both hands,
Ring every bell on earth!

